

VMC does not necessarily have the capability or qualified personnel to interact with marine traffic, nor does it necessarily respond to traffic situations developing in the area, as does a Vessel Traffic Service (VTS).

Vessel Movement Reporting System (VMRS) means a mandatory reporting system used to monitor and track vessel movements. This is accomplished by a vessel providing information under established procedures as set forth in this part in the areas defined in Table 161.12(c) (VTS and VMRS Centers, Call Signs/MMSI, Designated Frequencies, and Monitoring Areas).

Vessel Movement Reporting System (VMRS) User means a vessel, or an owner, operator, charterer, Master, or person directing the movement of a vessel that is required to participate in a VMRS.

Vessel Traffic Center (VTC) means the shore-based facility that operates the vessel traffic service for the Vessel Traffic Service area or sector within such an area.

Vessel Traffic Services (VTS) means a service implemented by the United States Coast Guard designed to improve the safety and efficiency of vessel traffic and to protect the environment. The VTS has the capability to interact with marine traffic and respond to traffic situations developing in the VTS area.

Vessel Traffic Service Area or VTS Area means the geographical area encompassing a specific VTS area of service. This area of service may be subdivided into sectors for the purpose of allocating responsibility to individual Vessel Traffic Centers or to identify different operating requirements.

NOTE: Although regulatory jurisdiction is limited to the navigable waters of the United States, certain vessels will be encouraged or may be required, as a condition of port entry, to report beyond this area to facilitate traffic management within the VTS area.

VTS Special Area means a waterway within a VTS area in which special operating requirements apply.

VTS User means a vessel, or an owner, operator, charterer, master, or person directing the movement of a vessel, that is:

(a) Subject to the Vessel Bridge-to-Bridge Radiotelephone Act; or

(b) Required to participate in a VMRS within a VTS area (VMRS User).

VTS User's Manual means the manual established and distributed by the VTS to provide the mariner with a description of the services offered and rules in force for that VTS. Additionally, the manual may include chartlets showing the area and sector boundaries, general navigational information about the area, and procedures, radio frequencies, reporting provisions and other information which may assist the mariner while in the VTS area.

[CGD 90-020, 59 FR 36324, July 15, 1994, as amended by CGE 97-023, 62 FR 33364, June 19, 1997; USCG-2003-14757, 68 FR 39364, July 1, 2003]

§ 161.3 Applicability.

The provisions of this subpart shall apply to each VTS User and may also apply to any vessel while underway or at anchor on the navigable waters of the United States within a VTS area, to the extent the VTS considers necessary.

§ 161.4 Requirement to carry the rules.

Each VTS User shall carry on board and maintain for ready reference a copy of these rules.

NOTE: These rules are contained in the applicable U.S. Coast Pilot, the VTS User's Manual which may be obtained by contacting the appropriate VTS, and periodically published in the Local Notice to Mariners. The VTS User's Manual and the World VTS Guide, an International Maritime Organization (IMO) recognized publication, contain additional information which may assist the prudent mariner while in the appropriate VTS area.

§ 161.5 Deviations from the rules.

(a) Requests to deviate from any provision in this part, either for an extended period of time or if anticipated before the start of a transit, must be submitted in writing to the appropriate District Commander. Upon receipt of the written request, the District Commander may authorize a deviation if it is determined that such a deviation provides a level of safety equivalent to that provided by the required measure or is a maneuver considered necessary

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for safe navigation under the circumstances. An application for an authorized deviation must state the need and fully describe the proposed alternative to the required measure.

(b) Requests to deviate from any provision in this part due to circumstances that develop during a transit or immediately preceeding a transit, may be made verbally to the appropriate VTS Director. Requests to deviate shall be made as far in advance as practicable. Upon receipt of the request, the VTS Director may authorize a deviation if it is determined that, based on vessel handling characteristics, traffic density, radar contacts, environmental conditions and other relevant information, such a deviation provides a level of safety equivalent to that provided by the required measure or is a maneuver considered necessary for safe navigation under the circumstances.

[CGD 90-020, 59 FR 36324, July 15, 1994, as amended by USCG-2005-21531, 70 FR 36350, June 23, 2005]

SERVICES, VTS MEASURES, AND OPERATING REQUIREMENTS

§ 161.10 Services.

To enhance navigation and vessel safety, and to protect the marine environment, a VTS may issue advisories, or respond to vessel requests for information, on reported conditions within the VTS area, such as:

- (a) Hazardous conditions or circumstances;
- (b) Vessel congestion;
- (c) Traffic density;
- (d) Environmental conditions;
- (e) Aids to navigation status;
- (f) Anticipated vessel encounters;
- (g) Another vessel's name, type, position, hazardous vessel operating conditions, if applicable, and intended navigation movements, as reported;
- (h) Temporary measures in effect;
- (i) A description of local harbor operations and conditions, such as ferry routes, dredging, and so forth;
- (j) Anchorage availability; or
- (k) Other information or special circumstances.

§ 161.11 VTS measures.

(a) A VTS may issue measures or directions to enhance navigation and vessel safety and to protect the marine environment, such as, but not limited to:

- (1) Designating temporary reporting points and procedures;
- (2) Imposing vessel operating requirements; or
- (3) Establishing vessel traffic routing schemes.

(b) During conditions of vessel congestion, restricted visibility, adverse weather, or other hazardous circumstances, a VTS may control, supervise, or otherwise manage traffic, by specifying times of entry, movement, or departure to, from, or within a VTS area.

§ 161.12 Vessel operating requirements.

(a) Subject to the exigencies of safe navigation, a VTS User shall comply with all measures established or directions issued by a VTS.

(b) If, in a specific circumstance, a VTS User is unable to safely comply with a measure or direction issued by the VTS, the VTS User may deviate only to the extent necessary to avoid endangering persons, property or the environment. The deviation shall be reported to the VTS as soon as is practicable.

(c) When not exchanging voice communications, a VTS User must maintain a listening watch as required by § 26.04(e) of this chapter on the VTS frequency designated in Table 161.12(c) (VTS and VMRS Centers, Call Signs/MMSI, Designated Frequencies, and Monitoring Areas). In addition, the VTS User must respond promptly when hailed and communicate in the English language.

NOTE TO § 161.12(c): As stated in 47 CFR 80.148(b), a very high frequency watch on Channel 16 (156.800 MHz) is not required on vessels subject to the Vessel Bridge-to-Bridge Radiotelephone Act and participating in a Vessel Traffic Service (VTS) system when the watch is maintained on both the vessel bridge-to-bridge frequency and a designated VTS frequency.